

SAVING OF MILLIONS

WHAT COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF WATERWAYS IMPROVEMENT MEANS TO FARMERS.

FIGURES TO SUPPORT FACTS

On Shipments of Grain Alone the Direct Return Would Mean \$100,000,000, and Proportionately All Other Products Would Be Affected.

In a former article we gave facts and figures to prove that, if the comprehensive plan of waterway improvement advocated by the National Rivers and Harbors Congress were carried out, the direct return to the farmers of the country, on the single item of grain, would certainly be \$100,000,000 a year—and probably would be more than twice that sum.

But grain is not the only item on which the farmers would receive a benefit. The fact is that for the farmer—and everybody else, for that matter—the cost of transportation influences practically everything he buys, sells, eats, wears or uses in any way whatever, except water, air and sunshine. The average man is inclined to laugh when told that he pays out more for transportation than he does for taxes or because of the tariff—but his laughter does not alter the fact in the least.

There are three principal methods of transportation, the wagonway, the railway and the waterway, and there is so great a difference in the cost of transportation by these different methods that it is worth while to study the matter a little. The experts of the good roads bureau estimate the cost of hauling a ton of freight one mile by horse and wagon on the average road in the United States at 25 cents. The cost on a thoroughly good, smooth road might be reduced to 10 cents. Poor's Manual gives 7.82 mills per ton-mile as the average price received by the railways in 1907, while the official records kept at the Soo show that the average rate on the freight carried into and out of Lake Superior in the same year was only 2 of one mill.

Facts in a Nutshell.

You can better understand what these figures mean if they are stated in another way. They mean that if you have a dollar to spend in shipping a ton of freight you can send it 4 miles on an average road, 10 miles on a first-class road, 127 1/4 miles on a railroad, and 1,250 miles on a lake vessel.

It is very easy to see that good roads are a lot better than poor roads but that transportation by horse and wagon is too costly at the best to be used except for small loads and short distances. So far as interstate traffic is concerned the wagon road must be left entirely out of consideration. It is just as easy to see what a great benefit would result from the building of a railway into a region where there was none before, and that a still greater benefit would result from so improving a river that it is made dependably navigable when it was not so before.

Waterways increase prosperity in three principal ways, viz: direct saving, indirect saving, and by what may be called a creative effect. The direct saving is that which occurs on goods actually carried by water, and some facts which indicate how great this direct saving is, will also make more plain the vast difference between the cost of transportation by rail and by water.

Through the Soo canal at the outlet of Lake Superior there were carried in 1907, 58,217,214 tons of freight. This was carried an average distance of 228.3 miles at an average cost of 2 of one mill per ton-mile. If this had been shipped by rail at the average railway rate for that year (7.82 mills), its transportation would have cost \$338,632,364 more than was paid for its carriage by water.

The total freight carried on all lakes that year was, in round numbers, 100,000,000 tons. This vast tonnage was carried for \$550,000,000 less than it would have cost to send it by rail, and the improvements, which produce a saving large enough to pay off the national debt in less than two years, cost only \$35,000,000.

Proof of Good Results.

Wouldn't you call that a pretty fair dividend on the investment? And don't you think it would pay to improve all our waterways as fast and as far as we can?

"But," says some one, "what reason is there to suppose that improved rivers would give anything like as good results as have been obtained on the lakes?" That is a proper question and is entitled to an answer.

The only waterway in this country which has been improved as a whole is composed of the four lakes above Niagara Falls, but there are many improved rivers in Europe. From a careful study of the results obtained on these rivers the army engineers estimate that when the improvement of the Ohio river is finished, freight can be carried thereon for one-half mill per ton-mile. That means that the dollar which will carry a ton 127 1/4 miles by rail and 1,250 miles by lake, will carry it 2,500 miles by river.

Cost of transportation will vary on different rivers with depth, width, swiftness of current, etc., but the estimated cost on a comparatively improved Ohio river can be increased by 50 per cent. before it will equal the average cost on the lakes in 1907, and there is still a margin of nearly 400 per cent. before you reach a rate one-half as high as that by rail. It will pay to improve our rivers.

CANADIAN RECIPROCITY

Many of the strongest Republicans in Congress are opposed to the Canadian reciprocity act because they believe it violates the principle of protection for which the Republican party stands, and not because they wish to occupy an attitude of opposition to President Taft. Those who adhere to the doctrine that the farmers and wage earners of the United States should be protected against competition with the agriculture and labor of other countries have been slow to favor making an exception of Canada. That prosperous country, under English rule, is predisposed to free trade. There is a fear that its free trade tendencies will cross the line with bad results.

There is another, and perhaps broader view, however, of the reciprocity proposition. It has its limitations and is in the nature of a neighborly or friendly agreement, the fact being recognized that the people of Canada and of the United States have much in common, and should be banded together against the cheap products and aggressive commerce of foreign nations, which would dump their factory and farm products, produced by cheap labor, into this country to the detriment of the toilers and wage earners who constitute so large a portion of the American population.

The fact that the Democratic leaders are all in favor of Canadian reciprocity does not make it an attractive proposition to stalwart Republicans, who are the advocates and defenders of that protective tariff system that has made the United States the greatest industrial and agricultural country on earth. The news from London is that there is a fear among English politicians that the reciprocity pact is the first step in the direction of Canadian annexation. So the Free Traders of England do not feel grateful to their Democratic brethren on this side of the ocean.

David B. Hays

ATTORNEY AT LAW

Jackson, Mo.

Office: West side of Public Square
Telephone 46.

EDW. D. HAYS

Attorney at Law

Notary Public

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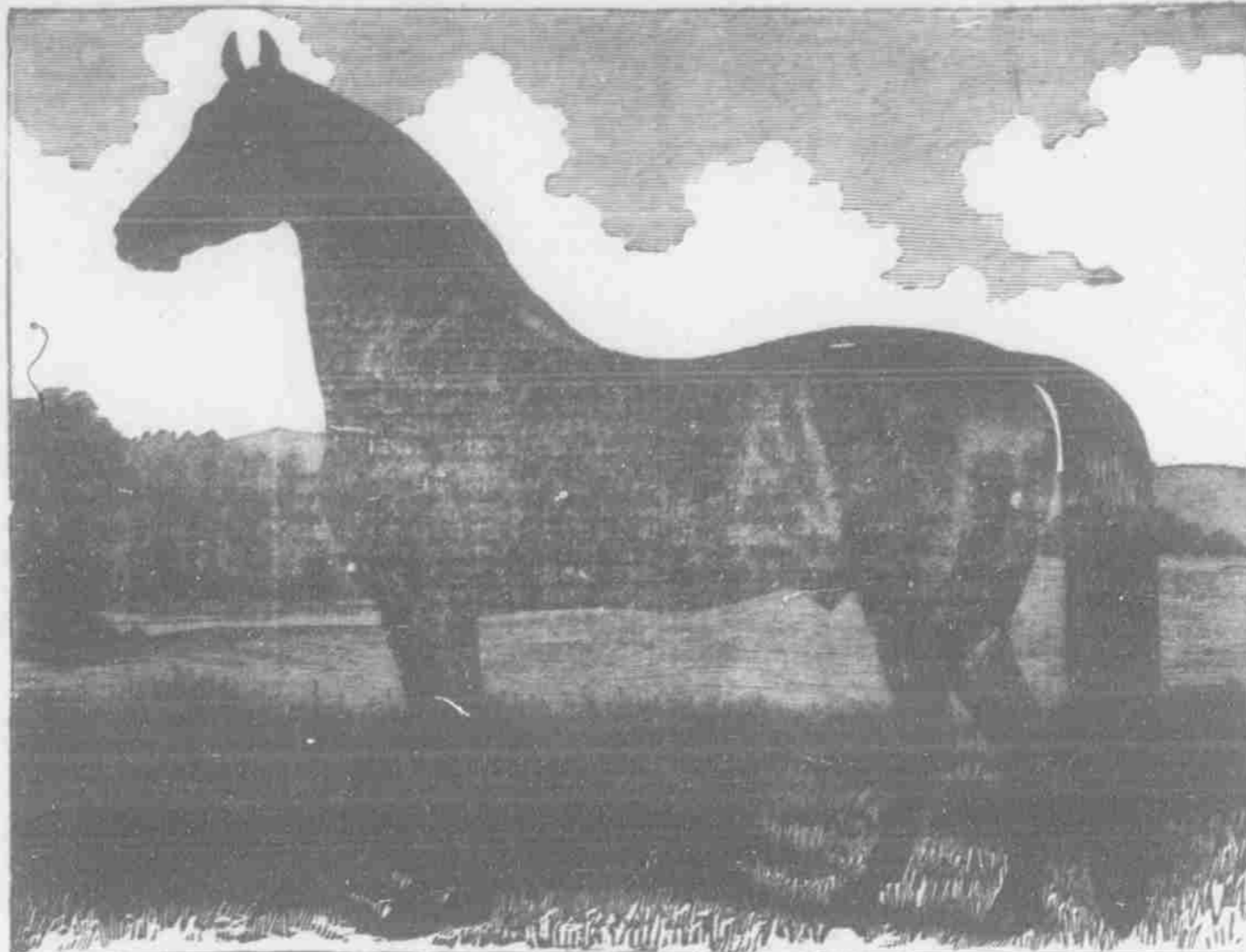
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